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# COMMISSION'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE UNITED NATIONS PROGRAMMES DESIGNED TO ASSIST DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

Note by the Executive Secretary

1. This Note is prepared in accordance with paragraphs 7 and 12 of Commission resolution 1 (45). The activities described below are considered to be of particular interest to ECE countries which are developing from the economic point of view and to developing countries of other regions. 1/ In the past year 25 countries from other regions have participated in 96 ECE meetings, in particular in the sectors of trade, transport, agriculture and steel. Eleven of these were countries of the ESCAP region, 6 of the ECA region, and 4 from each of the ESCWA and ECLAC regions.

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1/ Further relevant information is provided in the Executive Secretary's report on Economic Co-operation in the Mediterranean in the Light of the Final Act of the CSCE (E/ECE/1239).

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Economic developments, problems and prospects

2. Volume 42 of the Economic Bulletin for Europe includes an analysis of the external position and debt problems of developing countries (in chapter 1). The Economic Survey of Europe in 1990-1991 contains inter alia a review of recent developments in southern Europe. Work continued in support of several projects in the field of population funded by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) which are of immediate interest to developing countries. These projects are: "Economic and Social Consequences of Changing Population Structures" (RER/88/P02), "Promotion of Fertility and Family Surveys in the ECE Region" (RER/88/P03) and "Integration of Population and Socio-economic Policies" (REF/88/P04). A study on Advanced population aging: demographic and economic implications in the ECE region is being prepared for publication under the first project. The second project aims to assist ECE developing countries, as well as other countries in the region, with taking national fertility and family surveys in the first half of the 1990s.

Agriculture

3. Through its intensive work on the harmonization of commercial standards for perishable produce, the Committee on Agricultural Problems offers advice and assistance to developing countries which are interested in exporting certain fresh or dried fruit or vegetables to countries in the ECE region. The secretariat has regularly contributed to seminars on quality control organized by the International Trade Centre (UNCTAD/GATT) for least-developed countries. Through its close links with various departments of FAO, the Joint ECE/FAO Agriculture Section provides direct and indirect inputs to FAO's work on rural development, new and non-conventional feeding stuffs, selected aspects of soil fertility, the use of fertilizers and agricultural mechanization.

Timber

4. The Joint FAO/ECE/ILO Committee on Forest Technology, Management and Training encour ges the participation of experts from developing countries in its seminars by arranging with host countries to provide them with financial assistance. With forest fires one of the most serious problems faced by forest services in the Mediterranean area and in many developing countries, the Joint Committee continued its activities in this field, including the publication of a bi-annual International Forest Fire News and preparations for a seminar in Greece in 1991 on forest fire prevention, land use and people.

5. The Joint FAO/ECE Working Party on Forest Economics and Statistics has continued its efforts to transfer economic and statistical methods and experience to other regions, notably in the field of forest resource assessment. Steps were taken to provide forestry statistical units in developing countries with international and national forestry sector statistical material, including that generated by the Working Party. A proposal for a study to be carried out jointly by the Timber Committee and the International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO) on tropical markets in North America has been approved by the Committee and the ITTO Council, subject to availability of funds to be provided by the latter.

Environment

6. Within the framework of the Senior Advisers on Environmental and Water Problems, ECE Governments are implementing or preparing Conventions on environmental issues of growing significance also to developing countries: air pollution; use and protection of transboundary waters; industrial accidents and environmental impact assessment. The Executive Body for the Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution is focusing on several areas that are also relevant to environmental protection in developing countries, such as strategies and policies for air pollution abatement; monitoring and evaluation of the long-range transmission of air pollutants; air pollution effects on human health and the environment; technologies and economic aspects of emission control. (See also E/ECE/1237)

7. Taking into account the critical proportions assumed by acid-rain and other air-pollution damage to the environment in the region, the ECE/UNDP project on environmental management with the emphasis on air pollution control is designed to strengthen the permanent organizational and technical basis for joint action against air pollution. Sub-programmes focus on low-emission combustion processes, by-product utilization and disposal, flue gas treatment and fuel treatment, and standard-setting and economic incentives. Experts from 20 countries participated in a meeting on industrial co-operation for air pollution control technology held in Dubrovnik (Yugoslavia) in September 1990.

8. The Ministerial Declaration as well as the Joint Agenda for Action adopted by the Regional Conference at Ministerial Level to follow-up the Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development (Bergen (Norway), May 1990) contain recommendations and decisions related to developing countries. The preparation of the Conference involved representatives of both governments and non-governmental organizations and this was considered by participants to be a good example for other regions to follow. (See also E/ECE/1236)

9. Of particular interest in this connection is work carried out in the field of environment and economics aimed at defining the natural resource base for sustainable development and embedding environmental considerations in macro-economic indicators to achieve an optimal adjustment of economic activities to environmental concerns. The Joint Working Group on Environment and Economics (established by decision H (45)) held its first meeting in January 1991 during which an in-depth discussion took place on the follow-up to the Bergen Conference and on the concept of sustainable development.

10. An ad hoc meeting held in December 1990 in Antalya (Turkey) finalized the European Red List of Threatened Animals and Plants and made recommendations to ECE Governments on its application. The Senior Advisers are examining a report on the relationship between economic activities and conservation of flora, fauna and their habitats.

11. Of particular significance to developing countries was the Seminar on Waste-water Management, held in Munich (Germany) in May 1990. This Seminar provided a forum to exchange experience gained in the development and application of policies and strategies for waste-water management, including water-pollution abatement at source. It also helped Governments to compare ways of integrating waste-water management into environmental socio-economic

and sectoral policies and to keep under review techniques and means for collection and treatment of waste water and resulting sludge for safe discharge or disposal and/or possible re-use.

Human settlements

12. The Committee on Housing, Building and Planning is preparing a compendium of policy conclusions and recommendations emerging from the past 10 years of ECE activities in the field of human settlements, which could be useful to developing countries. A joint ECE/HABITAT meeting, with the participation of experts from developing countries, was held in Finland in August 1990 to discuss the effects of energy conservation policies in human settlements of the ECE countries on global energy supply in the long term.

Industrial development

13. A study has been completed on the rational use of water and its treatment in the chemical industry which is of special interest to certain developing countries. Studies underway on the management of plastic wastes and substitutes for tripolyphosphates in detergents could be of particular importance to developing countries in addressing some of their environmental concerns.

14. The annual review of the steel market, which highlights the most recent qualitative and quantitative trends both in the ECE region and globally, as well as the annual bulletins of world trade in steel and the biennial updates of statistics on iron and steel scrap are examples of the continuing work which are of interest to developing countries.

International trade and development finance

15. The Committee on the Development of Trade, in December 1990, discussed the trade problems of ECE member countries which are developing from the economic point of view. It requested the secretariat to supplement its study on measures providing favourable commercial treatment to these countries by examining the possibility of stimulating bilateral and other trade and investment relations between those countries and the reforming countries of eastern Europe.

16. Conscious of the global importance of facilitation for improving the international trade of all countries, the Economic and Social Council, in its resolution 1989/118, called on the regional commissions, jointly with UNCTAD, to formulate a project of interregional co-operation in this area that would promote the reduction, simplification and harmonization of formalities, procedures and documentation, in particular through the phased application of the United Nations rules for Electronic Data Interchange for Administration, Commerce and Transport, UN/EDIFACT.

17. A project document for interregional co-operation, prepared by the regional commissions and UNCTAD, was submitted to the Council at its second regular session of 1990, which adopted decision 1990/74 concerning the ECA

dimension of the interregional project. Paragraph 6 of the decision envisages further consideration of Council resolution 1989/118 by the regional commissions other than ECA before the Council's second regular session of 1991.

Energy issues

18. The secretariat has contributed to the UNDP/UNIDO project on Regional Co-operation in the Field of Industrial Energy Conservation (RER/83/003), and the UNDP/ECE project on Solar Applications and Energy Efficiency in Building Design and Town Planning (RER/87/006), which is of particular relevance to the exploitation of new and renewable sources of energy and energy conservation policies in developing countries The latter project is designed to develop and disseminate computer programmes which engineers and architects can use to design energy efficient buildings in European IPF countries, particularly those in the temperate to hot climatic zones. In 1990 the standard computer programme and design guideline for energy efficient building design was completed. Eight international training courses based on these materials will be held in 1991. A Seminar on Solar Power Systems will take place in the USSR on 22-26 April 1991.

19. The Steering Committee for the ECE/UNDP Project on European Regional Co-operation in the Field of Industrial Energy Conservation (27-28 February 1991) reviewed progress in industrial energy conservation in European IPF countries and discussed the development of a financially self-sustaining organization on industrial energy conservation.

20. The Working Party on Coal issued in 1990 a survey of world coal trade up to the year 2000 which is of interest to developing countries which are coal producers. Work has continued in other areas of interest to countries with developing coal industries, particularly with regard to opencast mining and mine safety. The ECE/UNDP Project on International Co-operative Research on Low-calorie Solid-fuel Technology is designed to increase the use of indigenous brown coal, lignite, peat and shale, the efficiency of its use and its environmental acceptance, by co-ordinating national and initiating international research programmes. Nine countries participate in the project.

21. The Working Party on Gas is studying the prospects of further integration and extension of gas grids in the ECE region, which for countries bordering the Mediterranean is of particular significance as they seek to diversify and increase gas exports/imports. Work in the field of natural and liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) is of interest to countries of the Mediterranean which make use, or intend to make use, of these gaseous fuels in covering their energy requirements.

22. In order to combat serious air pollution problems in a number of Mediterranean countries, alternative fuels to oil-based products are being actively promoted. This subject will be examined in the Symposium on the Use of Compressed Natural Gas (CNG), Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) and LPG as Fuels for Internal Combustion Engines to be held in Kiev (Ukrainian SSR) in September 1991.

Transport, communications and tourism

23. Technical advice is given by the secretariat to countries of Africa and Latin America interested in promoting the TIR system. In connection with the International Convention on the Harmonization of Frontier Control of Goods, the other regional commissions have been invited to take measures to promote resolution No. 230 of the Inland Transport Committee on technical measures for the implementation of the Convention.

24. Work on the implementation of the Trans-European North-South Motorway Project (TEM) has continued with the financial assistance of UNDP. Taking into account the recent developments in eastern Europe, the project countries have decided to include in the TEM networks extensions in East-West directions. They have also decided to co-operate for the international financing of the construction of the remaining TEM sections in this region. The next meeting of experts on TEM feasibility studies and resources for TEM construction will be held in June 1991 in Hungary. The training activities held under the project and substantially financed by the TEM countries are also available to the developing countries.

25. The Trans-European North-South Railway Lines (TER) (RER/87/028) project is designed to facilitate and develop railway traffic in Europe by co-ordinating existing national railway systems in their technical, economic and managerial aspects. The envisaged standardized infrastructure will link the European system to the Middle East. The technical outputs of the project will be beneficial to the developing countries.

26. The UNDP project on International Transport Development: Mediterranean, Europe and Middle East is a project which has been under consideration for a number of years. The latest developments include a Consultative (informal) Meeting, in October 1990, which agreed on the principles of a draft project document to be circulated to ECE Governments for comments and possible endorsement. The agenda of the meeting also included the possible participation in the project of Mediterranean North-African States.

27. The Executive Secretaries of ECE and ECA submitted to the second regular session of the Economic and Social Council in 1989 an interim report on the progress being made in the studies related to a Europe-Africa link through the Strait of Gibraltar. This report (E/1989/58) reviewed recent studies done with respect to the reconnaissance of the physical characteristics of the terrain as well as engineering, economic, financial and legal aspects of building such structures. The Council adopted resolution 1989/119 inviting interested Governments and institutions to attend the International Colloquium on the Fixed Crossing to be held in May 1990 in Marrakesh (Morocco) and asked the Executive Secretaries of ECE and ECA to submit an evaluation report to this colloquium as well as an interim report to the second regular session of the Council in 1991.

28. The Transport Study and Training Centres in Greece, Spain and Turkey continue to co-operate with the Inland Transport Committee and to make a very positive contribution to its programme of work. Their work also includes co-operation with the developing countries outside the region.

29. The secretariat has continued to service the activities of the ECOSOC Committee of Experts on the Transport of Dangerous Goods, which elaborates rules and regulations on the transport of such goods throughout the world and by all modes. Developing countries benefit from the technological know-how on which these activities are based. In accordance with ECOSOC recommendations constant efforts are being made to promote participation of interested developing countries in the work of the Committee of Experts. In 1990, for the first time delegates from India, Nigeria and Panama participated in the work of the Committee.

Statistics

30. The Conference of European Statisticians continues to support UNDP regional projects in statistics. The second phase of the Statistical Computing Project (SCP-2), aimed at assisting national statistical offices in introducing microcomputers in their EDP environments, started in 1987, with the participation of several developing countries. An important part of the project continues to be its outreach activities, by which the results are made available to developing countries in other regions.

31. The Conference of European Statisticians, in collaboration with the UNFPA, convened a seminar on demographic and economic consequences and implications of changing population age structures, in Ottawa (Canada) in September 1990.